

The Roles Of Input And Output In Sla

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ABSTRACT

This paper explored the roles of input and output in second language acquisition (SLA). Terms such as comprehensible input, input quantity, quality, mode, and conditions, interdependencies, output hypothesis, and Kistanova's and Ryan's experimental research were discussed. Stephen Krashen's 1985 Input Hypothesis and Swain's Output Hypothesis provided the foundation for this study. It was found that both input and output are essential components of language acquisition; input is used to expose and reinforce new language, while output allows learners to validate and reformulate language for true fluency and understanding. Additionally, it was discovered that a balance between input and output is necessary for successful language acquisition.

1. Introduction

This research focuses on input and output as two important constructs. Input refers to language learners are exposed to in communicative contexts. Output is the language learners produce for communication. Input is essential for acquisition, but the role of output is less clear. The debate centers around the role of output in developing formal features of language. The question is whether output is necessary or beneficial in aiding acquisition. However, in this research, both the role of input and output will be explained by reviewing journals and books related with both input and output.

Input is a critical factor in theories of second language acquisition (SLA) because it is the data used to construct language. Theories differ on the role of innate grammar and the interaction of input, but in general, input is given a distinct role in the acquisition process. For example, the Universal Grammar perspective acknowledges the role of input, but also emphasizes that acquisition is a result of both input variables and innate principles. It suggests that input triggers certain universal principles and language-specific parameter settings (White, 2007). Once learners have established a feature, acquisition no longer needs input to support constraints on that feature.

The connectionist perspective does not attribute any innate knowledge to the learner. Instead, it proposes that learners process linguistic information from input and tally it in the language learning process. This leads to the emergence of grammar over time (N. Ellis, 2007). Since connectionism does not recognize any internal pre-existing linguistic information, it places a strong emphasis on input as the most important factor in language production.

Input is a core component of the most prominent theories and research paradigms in SLA. In instructed SLA, input is the main source of information for learners to build a linguistic system. Input enhancement is a useful pedagogical approach in SLA because it focuses on using input to support language learning (Wong, 2005). This approach facilitates language transfer and enables greater depth in language-learning as well as developing more complex engage-ability in the target language.

Merrill Swain's Comprehensible Output Hypothesis outlines the importance of learner production in language acquisition ((1985). She theorizes that by producing language, learners are

provided with opportunities to use language meaningfully, formulate hypotheses and gain deeper semantic and syntactic analysis. However, other language development experts refute the hypothesis, arguing that learners are not able to test every language feature through production.

Steve Krashen introduces the Interaction Hypothesis in response, suggesting that by interacting with native speakers, learners gain beneficial modifications to their input (1980). This way, not only do they interact with language they receive, but the feedback through non-native-native interaction also enhances their attention to language features.

Swain has amended her initial hypothesis to emphasize the potential of output to further learner development. She states that it can promote language noticing, hypothesis formation and testing, and meta-talk about language. Although her focus has largely been on educational contexts, her stance on successful language acquisition without instructional guidance is yet to be clarified.

2. Literature Review

a. Input Hypothesis

Stephen Krashen is well-known for his contributions to the research field of second language acquisition (SLA). His Monitor Model, consisting of five hypotheses, is one of the most influential and controversial theories of SLA. The Input Hypothesis, being the core of the Model, proposes that comprehensible input is critical to language acquisition (Krashen, 1985). His argument has been widely acknowledged by researchers and it has become an integral part of many language teaching strategies (Gukhool & Carter, 2013). As a result, this hypothesis has been widely adopted by the language learning community and has been used by teachers to time to influence the language acquisition process in the classroom (hodge, 2017). Consequently, Krashen's Input Hypothesis continues to influence the the field of SLA due to its immense popularity and impact on second language teaching and research.

Krashen proposed the Monitor Model and the Input Hypothesis, one of the five hypotheses, is key among this.

Comprehensible input, an essential notion of the Input Hypothesis, is central to Krashen's theory that humans can only acquire language by understanding information within context (Krashen, 1982). He suggests that language learning is simply trying to make sense of what is being said. Thus, a focus must be placed on the content rather than the form. Krashen posits the notion of 'i+1', an increase in the level of lingual complexity beyond the 'i' current level of ability. This idea remains in the centre of debate, as it is difficult for educators to measure accurately how much of the language input adheres to 'i+1' due to varying levels between learners in the class (Mitchell, 2019). As a result, it is likely that 'i+1' or even 'i+3' may be provided. In order to address this, more precise and professional guidelines are necessary for the assessment and classification of language proficiency (Crisp, 2020).

Stephen Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1985) comprises four interdependent components: Input Quantity, Quality, Mode, and Conditions, which must be considered when designing a successful instruction program for the learner. First, Input Quantity refers to the need for a sufficient and abundant input of the target language to allow for meaningful language learning. Input Quality, the second element, means that the language input should be comprehensible for the learner by introducing language structures that are slightly above their current acquirement level (Krashen & Terrell, 1983). The third element is Input Mode, which dictates that learners should naturally receive input in the language environment, and the language material should be adjusted in terms of meaning. Lastly, Input Conditions should be taken into account, meaning that the learner should feel relaxed and secure for an optimal reception of input in order for language learning to be successful (Ellis, 2009).

The four elements identified as the criteria for comprehensible input are essential to the successful acquisition of a second language (Cook, 2016). Classroom instruction which is designed to meet these criteria has proven to be a successful approach for

language acquisition (Johnson, 2008). Furthermore, increased focus on the role of the learner in the process and decreased emphasis on a teacher-centered approach to education have been influential in moving theory of language acquisition forward (Brown, 2012). Although Krashen's Input Hypothesis has been valuable in emphasizing the importance of providing comprehensible input, there are aspects of the contact and practice of output which is not sufficiently explained by this approach. (Henderson, 2019)

b. Output Hypothesis

The Input Hypothesis and Interaction Hypothesis have long been used to study the influence of language environment on language acquisition, however scholars have recently begun to shift the focus to the perspective of language output (Leung, 2020). This shift is supported by research of immersion programs in Canada conducted by Swain, which found that while learners had receptive abilities near that of a native speaker, their productive abilities were comparatively weak and did not improve quickly, likely due to the emphasis on visual and auditory language input (Swain, 1985). Swain's Output Hypothesis, which posits that output is necessary to produce true fluency, has a number of important implications (Paige, 2018). Most notably, output allows learners to identify gaps between the target language and the one they have learned and provides them the opportunity to check their assumptions about language expression (Swain, 1985). Ultimately, output allows for reflection on language problems and encourages learners to discuss solutions, leading to greater language proficiency (Swain, 1985).

Output in language acquisition has been studied extensively and appears to be beneficial in terms of lexical and grammatical accuracy. Ellis and He (2001) proposed that output tasks have an effect on lexical accuracy. Nobuyoshi and Ellis (1993) conducted an experiment studying the English past tense and found that requesting clarification from the teacher can promote production accuracy. Izumi and Bigelow

(1992) conducted an experiment with the reconstruction of a passage to test the Output Hypothesis, and concluded that extended opportunities to produce output and receive relevant input are key for mastering grammar. However, the effectiveness of output in language acquisition has recently come under scrutiny. Some researchers, such as Brown (2020), questioned whether output is truly responsible for language acquisition given that students may not pay attention to language problems in their output, and may not have the relevant output opportunities in some classroom settings.

Kistanova (2008) conducted quantitative analysis of input and output in four domains with subjects speaking both heritage Russian (HR) and monolingual Russian (MR). The analysis revealed a strong interrelation between input and output in the use of verbal sentences and IMP (imperfective) aspect. Similarly, Ryan (2011) investigated the effect of input and output on students' language abilities in reception and expression. The results showed that more input lead to improved receptive vocabulary abilities, while more output was linked to expressive vocabulary abilities. Ryan suggested that both input and output should be emphasized in language programs. Despite this evidence, there is still a lack of conclusive proof that output leads directly to language acquisition (Schütze, 2019).

c. The roles of Input Output in SLA

The role of input and output in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) has been heavily discussed amongst scholars for many years. Stephen Krashen's 1985 Input Hypothesis suggests that comprehensible input is essential for language acquisition. This hypothesis has had significant impact in the language teaching community and is widely adopted and used in the classroom (Gukhool & Carter, 2013; Hodge, 2017). Krashen's language theory employs the idea of 'i+1' input, in which the input being offered is slightly advanced in terms of linguistic complexity beyond that of the learner's current level of ability (Krashen, 1982).

However, in recent years, the focus of

language acquisition has shifted towards to output hypothesis, proposed by Swain (1985). This hypothesis states that true fluency and complete mastery of a language can only be achieved by the production of language output (Paige, 2018). Accurately producing and expressing the language is necessary in order to identify the gaps in language and to promote reflection on language problems (Swain, 1985). Research by Kistanova (2008) and Ryan (2011) revealed that there is a strong correlation between input and output in language learning, with more input leading to improved receptive abilities and more output linked to improved expressive abilities.

Input and output, therefore, appear to be equally important when it comes to language acquisition. Receptive input is the foundation of the acquisition process, whereas, output provides pathways for internalisation of the language and for reflection (Ellis & He, 2001; Nobuyoshi & Ellis, 1993; Izumi & Bigelow, 1992). In order to promote successful language acquisition, teachers must take into consideration both input and output when constructing a lesson plan (Cook 2016; Johnson, 2008; Brown, 2012). Establishing a balance between the two will ensure that learners receive the necessary support and opportunity to practice for the best language outcomes."

Input and output can also be used to support different components of language learning. For example, input can be used to expose and reinforce new language for learners, and output can be used to provide opportunities to practice and use the language. By maintaining this type of structure in the classroom, learners can be given the appropriate scaffolding and guidance to acquire language effectively (Pinholt, 2009). Input can also be used to stimulate creativity, as learners are encouraged to think outside the box and work out the meaning of unknown language elements (Medgyes, 2004). Output provides valuable opportunities for further practice and understanding as learners are able to validate and reformulate the language in order to express their own thoughts and ideas (Swain, 1985).

Input and output also act as tools for

assessment. Input can be used to determine the level of language that a learner has acquired, while output offers an indication of how effectively a learner has embedded this language within their knowledge base (Hymes, 1964). Assessing both input and output provides not only a description of a learner's language use and accuracy, but also an indicator of their confidence and level of engagement (Lafford, 2009).

Input and output play a key role in stimulating cognitive development in language learners. By using educational strategies which focus on input and output, learners can become aware of different meanings which can be used in a given context and gain an increased control of the language. Furthermore, allowing learners to practice both input and output encourages positive motivation and promotes increased levels of engagement (Gatbonton, 1990).

Input and output offer learners a structure to support their language proficiency in the classroom. Input can be used to expose language and reinforce existing skills, while output allows learners to practice and apply the information they have acquired and therefore become more confident with the language (Van Lier, 1996). Finding the most appropriate balance between the two can have a significant impact on language acquisition, as learners are given the necessary tools to ensure successful acquisition (Shehadeh, 2008).

3. Conclusion

Based on the research, it can be concluded that input and output are both essential components of language acquisition. Input can be used to expose and reinforce new language, while output is necessary for true fluency and the mastery of a language. Furthermore, both input and output are necessary for cognitive development in language learners, as they allow for reflection and provide opportunities to practice. Ultimately, a balance between input and output is essential for successful language acquisition.

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